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Marion County Prosecutor launches 'Stop Delaying – Start Paying' child support amnesty initiative

Initiative stresses benefits of paying child support instead of facing prosecution, other penalties

(Indianapolis, Ind.) Marion County Prosecutor Terry Curry today announced a new child support amnesty initiative, "Stop Delaying – Start Paying," where MCPO will forego prosecution and extend other considerations to noncustodial parents who begin making their child support payments.

"In this tough economy, nearly every family is struggling in some way, particularly those parents faced with raising children without regular child support payments. For those parents ignoring their responsibility to pay child support because of the threat of prosecution, this amnesty program is their chance to get back on track," said Prosecutor Curry. "Whether they owe \$1,000 or \$100,000, if they stop delaying and start paying now, we will help them get job assistance, keep their driver's license, and avoid criminal or civil charges."

During the morning news conference announcing the six-week amnesty initiative, Prosecutor Curry highlighted the importance of parents taking responsibility for paying child support. According to a recent study, children without a father in the home account for 71 percent of all school dropouts.

"Stop Delaying – Start Paying" runs from August 17 to September 30. It includes an early intervention program to strategically target approximately 400 noncustodial parents who are currently behind on child support payments. Those individuals identified as part of the early intervention program will be contacted directly by the MCPO through mailings and phone calls. All communications between the MCPO and parents will focus on the importance of joining the program, and if needed, connect parents to additional resources and support.

Noncustodial parents who set up child support payments also can utilize the job assistance services through the "Parents That Work" program of the Prosecutor's Office. This free resource offered by the MCPO can be used to help parents find a job, or through mentoring, maintain their employment.

To assist parents who contact the Child Support Division, the MCPO is extending office hours for walk-in appointments. The main office, located at 251 E. Ohio St., is

open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Saturday hours will be offered by appointment only on August 27 and September 24, from 8 a.m. to Noon. To schedule an appointment, arrange payment, or for more information, parents can contact www.indy.gov/childsupport or call 327-1800.

"We are available for custodial parents who need to open a case to establish a support order as well as enforce one, and also to assist parents who owe child support in setting up payment arrangements," said Deputy Prosecutor John Owens, chief deputy of the Child Support Division. "The extended hours will also allow working custodial parents to make later appointments, and representatives will be available during those hours to work with noncustodial parents."

Last year, the MCPO collected approximately \$107 million in child support. The office currently is managing approximately 76,000 child support cases.

"Stop Delaying – Start Paying" kicks off during National Child Support Awareness Month. Indianapolis City-County Councillors Joanne Sanders (D) and Ryan Vaughn (R) recently introduced a bipartisan resolution to honor child support awareness during the Council's August meeting. Additionally, posters highlighting the initiative will be displayed in government offices, Marion County Library branches, YMCA locations, Kroger grocery stores and other community gathering places.

The child support amnesty program is the second initiative Prosecutor Curry is leading to foster an environment that encourages healthier families and children in Marion County. Prosecutor Curry recently announced the MCPO plans to file criminal charges against parents who neglect to send their children to school as part of an effort to curb chronic absenteeism and truancy.